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# IS THE GOSPEL SPIRITUAL PESSIMISM?

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Religious thinking is always influenced by contemporary conditions. It takes color and character from passing events and follows inevitably the main currents along which the life and thought of the times are flowing. The people who experience religion are people who have also social, industrial, political, and intellectual interests, who stand in a diversity of relationships, and who ordinarily share largely and directly in the whole world of life and action. Their religious experience they cannot isolate from that which meets them in other fields. Life with all its varied experiences is a whole, and whatever enters into it, whatever is brought to bear upon it, affects it in its entirety. Many waters flow into the stream, but all unite in one forward-flowing current.

Accordingly we can never understand the theology of any period until we acquaint ourselves with that period. The current world-view and scientific assumptions, the ignorance and growing knowledge, the prejudices and superstitions, the mighty, moving events, if there were such, all are potent in their influence on religious thinking and upon the formulas in which that thinking is expressed.

It would be strange indeed then if, in a time like ours, when the world has been filled as it never was before with the noise and tumult of war, when the stage has been crowded with stormy and distracting events, when the foundations

seemed to be destroyed and all was in upheaval—it would be strange indeed if there were not some reflection of all this in religious thinking.

We are quite prepared, therefore, to find the troubled character of our times exerting a profound influence upon religious thought. One conspicuous effect is seen in the revival and vigorous promotion of a form of teaching which pronounces a most pessimistic judgment upon the course of human history, which sees no adequate redemptive forces at work in the world, and which looks for a swift and sudden culmination through the irruption into our world of supernatural and overwhelming powers.

To summarize this teaching briefly: The world is bad and growing worse. All our boasted progress toward ideal ends is a dream and a delusion. The forces which prevail in the world are forces which work evil and issue in disaster, and under their operation the trend of history is steadily downward. There are no powers and no agencies resident in the world-process which can arrest the decline and avert final ruin. The only hope for the world lies in an intervention on the part of a being of a higher order, with superior powers, by whose resistless might the evil can be overwhelmed and the good rescued and exalted. That intervention we are to have in what is popularly spoken of as the “second coming of Christ.”

The exponents of this doctrine are by no means agreed as to details, but there are certain features common to all their expositions. Jesus Christ gave explicit assurance that he would come again to the world. His followers are to be in an attitude of expectancy with regard to his coming, for, though there are certain conditions to be fulfilled before that event, the coming is viewed as imminent and will be unheralded save as faithful souls may discern the signs which are to precede it. In the interval between Christ's leaving the earth and his return the gospel is to be preached to all nations for a witness, and as a means of saving individuals from the hopeless ruin into which the world with most of its inhabitants is plunging. The forces of evil will work with increasing malignance and activity, multiplying their triumphs as the expected advent draws near. Christ will suddenly appear and will gather to himself those who have been waiting and watching for his return. After a succession of events, a succession concerning which there is much conflict of opinion, but a succession which usually includes a personal reign of Christ on earth with his saints for a thousand years, a final judgment occurs, and the wicked and the righteous attain to their permanent estates. Thus the course of the world's history is to be broken off suddenly, its processes halted, all its energies displaced or destroyed, and by the swift exercise of a superior and resistless power the new heavens and the new earth are to be established.

This form of teaching has come into very great prominence since the outbreak of the European war. Throughout Christendom it is being promoted by a

vigorous propaganda. Numbers of prophetic conferences, in which outstanding leaders in the church have shared, have been held to inculcate this doctrine. In its emergence at the present time we have a repetition of what has occurred again and again in the history of Christianity. Conditions of a certain character have always called forth this type of thinking. The apocalyptic writings in which it gained fullest expression have been described as "Tracts for Hard Times," and whenever the church has fallen upon hard times, whenever events and conditions have enforced the conviction that the days were evil, this pessimistic judgment upon the course of human history, this despair with reference to the forces operative in the world-process, and this hope of a catastrophic deliverance have always emerged and have been accepted with avidity by multitudes.

It is an interesting phenomenon which must challenge the attention of any student of Christian life and thought. Quite aside from a merely academic interest, we must be concerned with the question of the truth or falsity of this form of doctrine because of the way it functions in relation to Christian activities. If this judgment upon the world is correct, if the world is evil and increasingly so, irredeemable by any forces now working in it, if the only salvation is the kind this doctrine describes, then we may as well abandon at once many of our endeavors. Why attempt to save that which cannot be saved? Why fight in a war to make the world safe for democracy when nothing good can have safety in the world? Why talk or think of the redemption of society

when society cannot be redeemed? We have no social gospel. The best that can be hoped for is that individuals here and there may be arrested in an evil course and won to righteousness. All those programs and movements which aim at moral and social betterment are vain and futile. The current sets steadily and swiftly downward, and we cannot row against this Niagara of decline.

The minister especially must get his bearings as to all of this. He wants to know the precise nature of his task and what line of action he may pursue with hope of success. Is he to preach the gospel merely as a witness and in the hope that a few souls may be rescued from impending ruin, or is he to preach it in the conviction that it is the power of God unto salvation wherever it can be applied, and then give himself without reserve to the endeavor to make it everywhere operative until all human relationships are transformed by it and the whole of life is shot through with the forces that heal and sweeten and save? What kind of career lies before a minister? What measure of achievement may he hope for? And to what sort of program are Christians to commit themselves? The answer to these questions is partly determined by the truth or falsity of this form of doctrine which has had such a vigorous resurgence in our time.

The convictions and expectations which come to expression in this teaching are not new. Its cardinal assumptions that the world is evil and that redemption can come only through an intervention from without are as old as the recorded thought of humanity.

They are peculiar neither to Jewish nor to Christian teaching but have been entertained by all peoples and show in the most ancient literatures.

The Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Persians, in their sacred writings picture the ills of life, the conflict between good and evil and with death. It is made clear that man needs deliverance, and again and again the confidence comes to expression that deliverance and victory will be achieved for him through powers and beings of a higher order. Thus for the Egyptians, Isis and Osiris conquer death. For the Babylonians, Marduk causes order to triumph over chaos and inaugurates a new and ideal era. The Persians were to be delivered from the terrible conditions of the last times and established in a state of blessedness by a Savior who was to be born in a miraculous manner from Zoroaster's seed.

The literatures of Greece and Rome reflect the same judgments with reference to the world and similar hopes of salvation. There had been in the past a Golden Age which men were far from enjoying in the present, but which would be ushered in again by some deity or heaven-sent deliverer. It is common indeed to represent the pagan world in the period immediately preceding the birth of Christ as involved in despair but thrilling with expectancy that a deliverer would come. The wise men who came out of the East were in quest of one for whom all the gentile world was waiting.

What we find among the Gentiles we find also among the Jews, but it is much more definite in form. The literature of the Hebrews discloses an almost infinite variety of conceptions as to the nature of the salvation to be effected, but there

were two main lines along which expectation went, and which may be indicated here. The Jewish people suffered much at the hands of other nations. The bitterness of captivity and oppression they tasted to the full. In the days of their despair they turned to their national god Jehovah in the conviction that he would assume the rôle of destroyer and deliverer, achieving freedom and security for them.

A higher and nobler conception shows in the preaching of the prophets. Israel suffers not merely because she is surrounded by nations more powerful than herself; the real sources of her miseries are to be found in her own wickedness. Another kind of salvation is needed. The terrors of the dreadful day of the Lord are pictured, but repentance will avert its judgments. To a repentant people Jehovah will be gracious. Deliverance and restoration will be wrought, and there are no colors bright enough to paint the picture of the restored people's happiness and prosperity. These lines of expectation converge upon an anointed one, a Messiah who will be Jehovah's agent in the work of redemption, and who will sit upon the throne of a triumphant Israel. These hopes take on more exaggerated and fantastic forms in the apocalyptic literature, where they were exploited to the utmost.

In such expectations, dimly seen among pagans, clearer and more exalted in Hebrew thought, Christians have been wont to see foreshadowings of the Christ. To be sure, the Jews have never in any numbers acknowledged him to be their expected Messiah, but for Christians this is He of whom the prophets spake. Now the surprising thing is that though

he was the one whose coming was desired, foretold, expected, these very same expectations which we have been reviewing have been carried over into Christian thought, persisting to this present time, and constituting the essentials of that teaching which we are considering. Its kinship with Jewish conceptions we see clearly as we review its program, including, as it almost invariably does, the restoration of the Jews to Palestine and the personal reign of Christ in Jerusalem. In the words of Dr. Davidson, "The events the Jews assign to the Messianic Age were the equivalent of those now assigned to the second advent."

The explanation of this survival in Christian thought I shall not attempt at this point, but I should like to remark in passing that if Christians persist in so interpreting messianic foreshadowings as to make it appear that the greater part of the messianic work remains unaccomplished, and will so remain until Christ's second advent, we ought not to censure too severely those Jews who on the basis of the evidence refuse to accept the historic Christ as Messiah.

I wish rather to follow for a little the history of these hopes and conceptions as they show in Christian thought. As I am to return to a consideration of the New Testament, I shall pass that by for the moment and begin with the early extra-canonical Christian writings. A survey of these reveals the fact that this teaching was widely diffused. It bulks large in the apostolic Fathers, some of whom present fantastic pictures of millennial bliss.

It comes to expression also in the apologists, of whom Justin Martyr may

be regarded as fairly representative. He stoutly affirmed his belief in the near approach of the end of the world. The world was so thoroughly evil that its ultimate destruction by fire was inevitable. Hostility toward Christians would steadily intensify until the Antichrist would appear. Then suddenly Christ would come accompanied by the angelic hosts. Punishment would be meted out to all his enemies, the righteous would be endowed with blessed immortality, and the present evil world would be destroyed by fire.

Tertullian holds similar views, but his program is more elaborate. The Roman Empire is to decline and then the Antichrist will appear to wage war upon the church. When the work of Antichrist is finished, Christ will suddenly appear, providing a magnificent spectacle, abundantly compensating the saints for their sacrifice in refraining from attendance upon heathen entertainments. There will be a period of a thousand years during which the righteous will share in the felicity of the New Jerusalem, and at the expiration of the millennium there will come final judgment and the destruction of the world by fire.

While such views were commonly cherished and taught they were also vigorously assailed. Gnostics, as would be expected, rejected them, but their most notable opponent was Origen, who accuses the upholders of such doctrine of interpreting the Scriptures in a Jewish sense. He substitutes a figurative interpretation of the millennial imagery.

Christianity makes progress in the world, and as its power increases and its triumphs multiply confidence in its ability to win and dominate the world grows, until Augustine in his *City of God* pictures the millennium, not as some-

thing to be achieved in the future, but as already realized, and, in the language of Professor Case, "He lays the ghost of millenarianism so effectively that for centuries thereafter the subject is practically ignored."

While Augustine laid the ghost of millenarianism he was responsible also for some slight revival of it. He had affirmed that the millennial reign of Christ began with the career of the earthly Jesus, and recollection of his teaching served to stimulate millennial hopes as the year 1000 came near. The interest in them, however, did not become general in the church.

It was not until two centuries later that this type of thought came into prominence again, when Joachim of Floris, profoundly dissatisfied with the state of the church, came to the conclusion that the end of the world would not come until the church experienced a rebirth through a return of the Holy Spirit. He fixed the date for this regeneration of the church as 1260, and it was to be followed speedily by a mighty conflict with the powers of evil, the final judgment, and the inauguration of a new order.

The stirring events of Reformation times gave rise again to the conviction that the second coming of Christ and the end of the world were at hand. Both before and after the Reformation various groups entertained these expectations, which, with them, ran off into fanaticism, a striking example of which is afforded by the Münster Community, where a special form of government was set up and a new Zion established in anticipation of the speedy return of Christ.

In England in the seventeenth century the Fifth Monarchy movement

attained considerable strength. Its advocates were bitterly opposed to Cromwell, professing allegiance to King Jesus only, and claiming that he was about to appear to establish a fifth monarchy.

Somewhat later, in Germany, the theologian G. A. Bengel gave an impetus to millennial hopes by his commentary on the Book of Revelation, to which he gave a literal interpretation. He fixed upon the year 1836 as the year for the inauguration of the millennium.

The French Revolution had about the same effect as the recent war in its incitement to this kind of thinking. Napoleon was identified as Antichrist, and once more, by many individuals and communities, the end was deemed to be at hand.

At a later date we have in Great Britain the rise of the Catholic Apostolic church and of the Plymouth Brethren, both asserting the need for a spiritual church prepared to receive the bridegroom, who was at hand. Edward Irving, of the Catholic Apostolic church, fixed upon the year 1864 as the year of Christ's return.

In America, early in the nineteenth century, arose the Mormons, who, under the leadership of Joseph Smith, proceeded to found a new community, a city of Zion, to which Christ would come and there set up his millennial kingdom. About the same time the Millerites created a great deal of excitement, and their founder indicated 1843 as the date for Christ's return. Christ failed to appear, but the faithful were bidden to wait until the next year, when he would surely come. That year also elapsed without his appearing, and after that the leaders of the sect were less specific as to dates.

More recently there has grown to great proportions a movement led by Charles T. Russell. Pastor Russell, as he preferred to be called, asserted that the millennium was invisibly inaugurated in 1874, and the end of the present world was prophesied for 1914. He found many to accept his teachings, but the year 1914 has passed, and so has Pastor Russell, and the world wags on.

And now once more, under the stress of war, we have a marked revival of this form of teaching. Just as the sufferings of the Jews, the persecutions which the early Christians endured, the stirring events of the Reformation, the massacre of the Huguenots, the French Revolution, the stormy days of civil war in England, just as stirring events and hard conditions in any time have led men to believe that the climax of wickedness was at hand, so now this war, which has involved in its horrors almost the entire world, has convinced many that we have really come to the last days, and that it behooves all Christians to be in an attitude of eager expectancy, for at any moment a strange new light may fill the skies and the king be at the doors.

Those who hold this view of things are strenuous and insistent in their advocacy of it. They plead the Scriptures in its support, and often charge those who differ from them with disloyalty to the Scriptures. They deem it vital and seek to make it central in Christian life and thought. The very prominence they give to it justifies an attempt to evaluate it and arrive at a conclusion with reference to its truth or falsity.

A question which very naturally suggests itself in any reflection upon the subject is, How does this get into the Christian scheme of things? That it has held

a place in Christian thought through the centuries is evident, and in my judgment it appears in the New Testament itself. How comes it that Jewish expectations with reference to the Messiah leap over what Christians regard as the Messiah's advent and travel on with little modification in Christian thinking? The answer seems to me to be obvious. The first Christians were Jews, who accepted Jesus as the Messiah, but he did not fulfil their expectations of a Messiah. His path was not one of glory leading to a throne, but one of humiliation, apparent defeat, and death. When he died their hopes died with him. His resurrection revived their hopes, but he left them without having done what they expected the Messiah to do. How explain his death, which was foreign to their conception of the Messiah? How explain his failure to perform the messianic mission? What of that temporal kingdom of power and glory which he was to usher in? The answer which they found was that he had gone away for a little while only, and that he would come back again and do all that the Messiah was to do. That conviction they cherished, and in that hope they lived and endured. True or false as their opinion may be deemed, it explains, to my mind, the rise and persistence of this type of thought in Christianity.

That becomes all the more clear, it seems to me, when we examine the New Testament Scriptures, for in them the expectations which I have just indicated come to frequent expression.

We shall do well to remember, as we examine these writings, that the period in which they were produced was one in which apocalypticism had come to the fore. There is a wealth of apocalyptic

literature, both Jewish and Christian, and the earliest extra-canonical Christian writings, if not wholly apocalyptic in character, include much of that element. It would be strange indeed if something of this did not gain entrance to the minds of the New Testament writers and manifest itself in their thinking. We may not agree with a recent writer that the New Testament is saturated with apocalypticism, but it seems to me that a candid reading of the New Testament compels one to concur in the statement of another, that "there is not a single writer in the New Testament who does not look forward to the personal return of Christ in his own generation."

But along with such expectations and conceptions are others of an entirely different character, which imply events and progress affecting and transforming world-history through a long period. The student of the New Testament finds himself in difficulty because of the conflicting judgments recorded there. These seem to make it impossible to construct any consistent scheme of eschatology on the basis of the New Testament.

We may look first at the reported sayings of Jesus as they appear in the Synoptics. Here are numerous utterances which indicate that, though upon his own confession he did not know the day and hour of the event, he anticipated his own speedy return and the catastrophic end of the world. There is, for example, that perplexing eschatological discourse recorded by each of the Synoptics. What can we make of it? Explain it as we will, the fact remains that it has always kindled and supported hopes of an imminent and spectacular advent. It is so interpreted to this day by many earnest souls. But along with



such statements go descriptions of the kingdom and its nature and growth, the announcement of power with which his followers were to be equipped, and the outline of a program which seems to call for a period of centuries, through which the leaven which he has implanted is to work until the whole has been leavened.

If we turn to Paul it is reasonably clear that he expected the early return of his Lord, with the spectacular events which were to precede and attend that coming. He thought that it might occur while he and his contemporaries were still living.

It is true upon the other hand that he admonishes the Thessalonians not to be unduly disturbed, as "that the day of the Lord is just at hand." "It will not be except the falling away come first and the man of sin be revealed." The time comes when Paul has apparently relinquished his earlier hope and resigned himself to death, which he calmly anticipates. Further, he unfolds a conception of the kingdom which involves progress and achievement through an extended period leading to ultimate and complete triumph in the world.

What is true of the Synoptics and of Paul holds true also of the other New Testament writers. In each can be found explicit statements indicating that the early return of Christ and the end of the age were expected. Along with these occur intimations with regard to the nature and growth of the kingdom which hold promise of a long and triumphant course for it in the world. This is true even of the Book of Revelation, whose obscurities have always furnished a ready refuge to ardent millennialists.

What are we to say with reference to these conflicting conceptions? There is

seldom any gain in evading a difficulty. It is best to face our problem frankly and inquire what possible solutions there are. It is suggested that textual criticism may help us somewhat, but I cherish no great hopes in that direction. Such an amount of careful and thorough work has been done in that field that the accepted text is fairly well established, and there is little likelihood of any material reconstruction of it. Again the suggestion is made that perhaps our interpretations are in error, and that if we could arrive at a correct interpretation all discrepancies would vanish, and all would be in harmony. I see no way of escape by that means, and the interpretation which attempts it seems to me so ingenious as to lose validity.

We shall do better, I think, if we recognize, in accord with a suggestion already made, that the New Testament is not an isolated phenomenon wholly detached from the past and from contemporary conditions. It will be conceded that in it we have a rich heritage from the religious life of the Hebrews and also a new and unique contribution to religion. It would be natural that the New Testament writers, Jewish in training and traditions, should cling to the old, which was precious in their sight; indeed it would be inevitable, if they were influenced at all by the past and by contemporary thought. At the same time they manifest a growing understanding of the new which had been committed to them. Their traditional eschatological expectations they still cherish, together with the hope of their realization through Christ; but they also progressively assimilate his fundamental teachings, and thus come constantly into clearer insight into the real nature of the

kingdom he had founded in the world. Their writings show them in transition from an eschatological view, characteristically Judaistic, to one essentially Christian.

That, to my mind, is the true explanation of the conflicting conceptions which appear in the New Testament. Recognizing it, we are compelled to choose between a literalistic interpretation of selected passages, many of them the most obscure in these writings, and an attempt to arrive at a fair and accurate appraisal of the general drift and tenor of the New Testament teaching. The former will yield us that which is essentially Judaistic, for it deals with what are mainly Jewish survivals. The latter will yield us that which is fundamentally Christian.

Which course one will take is determined pretty much by one's attitude toward the Scriptures. Because the literalists have so much to say about those who differ from them, playing fast and loose with the Scriptures and denying their authority, I wish to point out the difficulty in which the literalists are involved. In their view of the case the New Testament teaches the unexpectedness and imminence of Christ's return. But 1,900 years have gone by, and he has not come. Were the New Testament writers mistaken? "Not at all," say the literalists, and then they go on to say quite the worst thing possible, it seems to me, about these men. They make them out to be worse than mistaken. They affirm that the teaching of the New Testament was carefully adapted to give to each generation the impression that Christ's coming might be just at hand, in order that each genera-

tion might have the inspiration of the thought that the Lord might appear at any moment; that is, the New Testament writers were inspired to kindle false hopes. If they knew what they were doing their good faith and veracity are at once in question, and, whether they did or did not know, the literalist's explanation, together with his view of the Scriptures, impugns the veracity of the divine Inspirer.

I prefer an explanation which involves no moral charge against the writers of the New Testament. They did not deceive. They were holy men moved by the divine Spirit, and the clear light of truth shines through what they write. But they had not struggled quite free from preconceived opinions, from their mental and spiritual inheritance, and some shadow of these fall upon the page. That is the explanation of those obscurities which the literalist seizes upon to support his doctrine.

If it be still insisted that such a view questions the validity of the Scriptures, I ask in reply, Which invalidates them the more, deliberate deceit on the part of the writers, as the position of the literalist implies, or error in opinion under the influence of a tradition which they were fast outgrowing? For myself I have no difficulty in choosing, and I choose in the conviction that the truth is to be found, not in those isolated passages on which the literalist depends, but in the general drift and tenor of the New Testament teaching. This goes counter to the whole millennial conception which we are reviewing.

What then, we may ask, gives to this doctrine such singular vitality, enabling it, as it does, to persist in human

thought? I answer, Its sublime, unconquerable optimism; an optimism which under the most adverse conditions maintains an assured expectation of the establishment of a new and better order, in which men will escape the evils which oppress them and will gain peace, happiness, and the highest good.

By reason of that optimism it awakens a response in the human spirit which, as someone says, is incorrigibly eschatological. This is a world in which men have sinned much and suffered greatly. Yet throughout they have believed that there would come a better time, a Golden Age, in which the best they had cherished in their dreams and desires would be achieved. Some such hope has always been singing in humanity's heart. Sometime the winter of man's discontent will be made glorious summer. That is the optimism which underlies and supports this form of teaching.

In that optimism we may fully share, but at the same time we are compelled to reject this doctrine as hurtful and erroneous because of its utter and unrelieved pessimism with regard to the present world and the forces working in it. Always, according to this teaching, salvation is to come from without. From some other realm the deliverer will spring, and powers which transcend our world-order will come into action. The pagan in the distant centuries and the Jew were justified in such expectations. There was a time when a prophet could write, "The desire of all nations shall come." The error of the Christian who clings to this pessimism with regard to the world and the forces operative in it lies in his failure to recognize that the desire of all nations has come; that he

appeared in person to announce and establish his kingdom; that he summoned into action forces by which that kingdom was to be carried forward; that that kingdom is growing in the world, and that its progress holds both promise and fulfilment for all man's noblest hopes.

But the millennialist shuts his eyes to that. The world is hopeless. There are no forces working in it which can effect its redemption. The good is on the ebb, the evil on the flow and steadily mounting toward a climax of wickedness. All that Christ did, all that he initiated, and the Spirit clothing his messengers with might have no power to arrest this tide. Christ must come again in different form, with a new program, and with other powers than those he exercised when here. That is the form which this pessimism takes in much Christian teaching today, and concerning which I have the following remarks to offer:

1. It is of a piece with the error of the Jews, who rejected the historic Jesus and who still look for a literal, material fulfilment of messianic predictions.

2. It is directly opposed to the conception of the character and progress of the kingdom given us in the New Testament Scriptures.

3. It is at variance with the facts of history. No one can take the long look across the centuries, especially those which have passed since the advent of Christ, without concurring in the verdict of Lord Acton: "The action of Christ who has risen upon mankind fails not but increases."

4. It involves utter distrust of spiritual forces. It denies the inherent invincibility of right. It exalts might

above right, the material above the spiritual, for in the end, in this view of the case, the kingdom is to be established, not by spiritual means, but by a spectacular advent, when Christ will exercise physical might in a supreme catastrophic stroke and thus achieve what spiritual forces had failed to achieve. Militarism becomes the final hope of the saints.

5. It discourages all efforts to make the world better. Try as we will, we cannot make the world better. It is fated to grow steadily worse. Vain and futile are all attempts at social and industrial reform, all endeavors to promote brotherhood, righteousness, and justice among men. Missions can have no social meaning and effect. The city of God cannot be built with human hands.

Men will not work long, however, at an impossible task. Soldiers cannot be expected to preserve their morale in the face of inevitable defeat. And why work, why fight, when all at which working and fighting aim is to be achieved, not by working and fighting, but by an imminent event of another character altogether? Under this scheme of things there is no incentive to and no necessity for those multitudinous beneficent activities which the gospel inspires, and which have already yielded such noble fruitage in our world.

We cannot but conclude then that this war-time emphasis in religious thinking is false in its nature and baneful in its influence. It is a recurrent phenomenon. It appears with every crisis, and every crisis of the last 1,900 years has been seized upon as the time of Christ's coming. In the very language that is now being employed men have

affirmed that the end was at hand. But the world has gone on, and only yesterday half its people and more were fighting in the greatest war the world has known, to preserve and make safe for all the future things more precious than life. In a way the war was a magnificent expression of the age-long hope that a better world is possible. Men laid down their lives because they believed in a future, a future to be made better than the past, more noble and glorious, by the exaltation of truth, freedom, and right. In their struggle and their sacrifice they were looking, they were going, in an upward way which the Scriptures make plain before us, and along which history has been moving to this present moment. These men did not die in vain. They were not deceived in cherishing the fairest hopes with reference to the future. "The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which indeed is less than all seeds, but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becometh a tree." "The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." That is the story which the moving centuries unfold.

There came into our world one to whom all authority was given, who assured those to whom he committed his program that he would be with them to the end, who promised to clothe them with power, who has been marching with them down the years, and who will go onward with them until the forces which he captains and directs have so achieved and triumphed that the prayer "Thy kingdom come" shall have here upon the earth its full and perfect answer.